CARING FOR CONFEDERATE GRAVES

Under the sod and the dew
Waiting the judgment day;
Under the roses the Blue;
Under the lilies, the Gray.

E PLURIBUS UNUM

By MAJ. GEN. FREDERICK DENT GRANT, U.S.A.

EVERY soldier must rejoice at the action of Congress in making an appropriation for the preservation of the Confederate graves. Perhaps I may be permitted a special pride in it, because it seems to be carrying on the work of reconciliation which my father began at Appomattox in terms to Lee's army, and which he still further advanced when as President he refused his sanction to a great series of paintings to commemorate the victories of the war. To be sure, his modesty played a part in his decision, for he would have been a central figure in many if not most of the canvases; but a stronger motive was the desire that all rancor should be extirpated between the North and the South. This was one of the strongest desires of his heart, and even during the war he could not help often expressing his regret that the victories of the Northern armies must be won at the cost of their fellow countrymen. Had he still lived it would have been a cause of the greatest satisfaction to him that the Government had finally taken this action.

Caring for the graves of the old soldiers is a tribute to sentiment, and will make its strongest appeal to the women of both sides. It will help, I hope, to unite more closely the South and the North; but it will touch women's hearts deepest. And this is as it should be; for it is to women—to women of the South—that the beginnings of the movement may be traced.

At the head of this page is a stanza from the poem that everybody knows, "The Blue and the Gray"; but few probably know what the occasion of the poem was. It was afforded by the action of the women of a little Southern town,—Columbus, Mississippi,—who, going out to decorate the graves of the dead soldiers, strewed flowers alike on the graves of the Confederates and the Federals. This was in 1867, and the news spread through the papers, till it reached a poet, Francis Miles Finch, who was stirred to write the lines which are read everywhere.

A Long Time Coming

IT seems fitting that the Government should now follow the example set by these generous women of the South. This has been long coming. It is more than forty years since the smoke of the last conflict cleared away from the fateful field of Appomattox, and men who were then beardless boys are now white haired grandsires with a third generation about their knees. And for these forty years it would seem as if the thirty thousand Confederate soldiers who died in Northern prisons and hospitals were almost forgotten.

The Union dead had been cared for in national cemeteries at a cost of several millions, Soldiers' Homes sheltered the helpless, while over three thousand millions have been expended in pensions. In the South the Confederate veteran, as a rule, succeeded well in life, and, if unable to care for himself, found a comfortable refuge for his old age in a State institution. But those who had died of disease and confinement far away from home lay "unwept, unhonored, and unsung" in their sunken graves, known only by a half obliterated number upon a headstone.

Within the last year this has been changed, and the Federal Government has appropriated two hundred thousand dollars and appointed a commissioner whose duty it is to locate these forgotten graves, mark them by appropriate headstones, and see that the ground is cared for and remains sacred soil. This duty was undertaken by the Government largely as a result of the efforts of the Charles Broadway Rouss Camp, No. 1191, United Confederate Veterans, of Washington, D. C. This camp, by the unceasing expenditure of time and money, and by the untiring efforts of its commander, Dr. Samuel E. Lewis, was the first to take up the matter, and by this agitation of the question the present happy result was brought about.

The question is to be considered in two aspects: first, why so many Confederates died and were buried in the North, and second, the history of the movement toward redeeming the graves from oblivion.

During the war between the States there was no official exchange till 1862, when an agreement known as the Cartel of Exchange was entered into by the conflicting parties. This contract held good for about a year, and during that period the Union and Confederate men were returned to their own lands. But at the end of that time the Union officials refused to act longer under this agreement, till at last the situation became strained to a degree that my father himself gives in a despatch to General Butler, dated City Point, August 18, 1864:

General Grant's Views

ON the subject of exchange, however, I differ from General Hitchcock. It is hard on our men held in Southern prisons not to exchange them; but it is humanity to those left in the ranks to fight our battles. Every man released on parole or otherwise becomes an active soldier against us at once, directly or indirectly. If we commence a system of exchange, which liberates all prisoners taken, we will have to fight till the whole South is exterminated. If we hold those caught, they amount to no more than dead men. At this particular time to release all rebel prisoners North would insure Sherman's defeat and would compromise our safety here.

In an official report to the Congressiohal Committee on the Conduct of the War, General Benjamin F. Butler concludes with these words:

I have felt it my duty to give an account with this particular carefulness of my participation in the business of exchange of prisoners, the orders under which I acted, and the negotiations attempted, which comprises a faithful narration of all that was done, so that all may become a matter of history. The great importance of the questions, the fearful responsibility for the many thousands of lives sacrificed by the most cruel forms of death,—from cold, starvation, and pestilence of the prison pens of Raleigh and Andersonville,—being more than all the British soldiers killed in the wars of Napoleon, anxiety of fathers, brothers, sisters, mothers, wives, to know the exigency which caused this terrible, and, perhaps it may seem to them, useless and unnecessary destruction of those dear to them by horrible deaths, each and all have compelled me to this exposition; so that it may be seen that those whose lives were spent are a part of the system of attack upon the Rebellion, devised by the wisdom of the General in Chief of the armies, to destroy it by depletion, depending on our superior numbers to win victory at last. The loyal mourners will doubtless derive solace from this fact, and appreciate all the more highly the genius that conceived the plan, and the success won at so great a cost.

While this order may seem hard, it was a case where one "must be cruel only to be kind." Measures which brought about rapidly the desired result —surrender—were in reality the most humane. Father's reasoning was perfect; for as the North had far more than double the number of Confederate prisoners, it was thus reduced to a question of mathematics. This order resulted in a congestion of Confederate soldiers in the Northern hospitals and prisons.

The United States prisons used to confine Confederate prisoners during the war were located as follows:

Alton, Illinois.	Johnson Island, Ohio.
Camp Butler, Illinois.	Louisville, Kentucky.
Camp Chase, Ohio.	New Orleans, Louisiana.
Camp Douglass, Illinois.	Newport News, Virginia.
Camp Morton, Indiana.	Washington, D. C.
Elmira, New York.	Point Lookout, Maryland.
Fort Delaware, Delaware.	Rock Island, Illinois.
Fort LaFayette, New York.	Ship Island, Mississippi.
Fort McHenry, Maryland.	St. Louis, Missouri.
Hart Island, New York.	Fort Warren, Massachusetts

At present there are nine thousand three hundred Confederate prisoners of war buried in national Federal cemeteries. Outside the national cemeteries there are about twenty thousand dead, uncared for by the Government at all, their graves almost obliterated; and the land in which they are is in many cases about to pass into private hands to be used for commercial purposes.

Approved by McKinley

TO consider the second aspect of the question, which is the present movement by the United States Government to mark and care for the graves of the Confederate soldiers in the North, it is necessary to quote from President McKinley's famous speech at Atlanta on December 14, 1898. In it he says:

And while, when these graves were made, we differed widely about the future of this Government, these differences were long ago settled by the arbitrament of arms; and the time has now come in the evolution of sentiment and feeling, under the providence of God, when in the spirit of fraternity we should share with you in the care of the graves of the Confederate soldiers. The cordial feeling now happily existing between the North and South prompts this gracious act; and if it needed further justification it is to be found in the gallant loyalty to the Union and the flag so conspicuously shown in the year just passed by the sons and grandsons of these heroic dead.

It was in this same year, 1898, but a few months earlier than McKinley's speech, that members of the C. B. Rouss Camp had by a painstaking investigation found at Arlington national cemetery the graves of one hundred and thirty-six Confederate soldiers, and later at the Soldiers' Home one